

# Encouraging Your Toddler to Talk

## **WAIT for it:**

Don't cater to your child's every need or want before they have a chance to communicate with you.

*Example:* When you know your child wants a drink – instead of just handing them the drink, wait for them to request it (pointing, signing, or saying “drink”).

## **Mess things up:**

Mess up routines so your child has to communicate his or her needs.

*Example:* During mealtime give everyone a spoon but “forget” to give your child a spoon. Wait and see if your child initiates they need something. If they don't initiate what they need, help them by saying. “What do you need?” or “Are you missing something” or “Uh-oh!” Label the item before you give it to them.

Play “dumb” when your child points to a desired object.

*Example:* When your child points to the counter for their drink (or another desired object you know they want), say: “What do you want?” (pause) “A spoon?” (pause) “An apple?” (pause) “A drink?” .... “Oh, you want a drink!”

## **Simple Speech:**

Use clear simple speech with your child during play routines. The goal is to talk in phrases your child may be able to copy. Slow things down and wait for your child to take his turn.

*Example:* Instead of saying “Go down the hall and get your shoes” say “Get your shoes”. When getting undressed use short phrases “Shoes off...shirt off...etc.”

## **Add a little:**

Add 1 or 2 words to what your child says when you respond back to him or her.

*Example:* When your child says “up” say “up... you want up”.

## **Talk about You:**

When your child is within hearing range, talk about what *you* are doing while you do it.

*Example:* When washing your hands at the sink say “wash my hands”, when the phone is ringing say “I hear the phone”.

## **Talk about Them:**

When playing with your child, describe what *your child* is doing while they are doing it.

*Example:* When your child picks up a car – say “pick up the car”. When your child drops a block – say “drop the block”.

Describe what he is seeing and hearing.

*Example:* “That's a ball”, When listening to music say “Music, listen to music”

## First sounds/signs

**Signs:** wave bye-bye, more, eat, all done, up, common foods/drinks, bath

**Sounds:** animal sounds (woof, neigh, baa, whoo), environmental sounds (beep beep)

## Common first words

Mommy	yes	banana	hat
Daddy	no	cookie	book
baby	dog	car	more
milk	cat	hot	all gone
juice	ball	thank-you	
hello	nose	bath	
bye-bye	eye	shoe	

\*good place to start when thinking of words or ideas to help your child learn

## Reading Books with Toddlers

**Follow Your Child's Lead:** let your child decide how long you should be reading (a few minutes at a time is just fine), how much of a book you should read (you don't have to read to the end of the story), and which parts of the book to read (you don't have to go in order or in *any* order). Reading will be a lot more fun if you focus on what your child *is* interested in instead of what you think your child *should be* interested in.

**Talk about the Pictures:** you do not have to read all (or any) of the words to tell a story. Ask your child what he sees, look at what your child is looking at, and talk about those pictures.

**Bring the Pictures to Life:** When you are reading try to bring the pictures to life: pretend to "eat" the berries, "wash" the boy's dirty hands, "pet" the soft kitty, etc. These types of games will help your child comprehend what the picture means.

**Let Children Turn the Pages:** babies may not be able to turn the pages of a book but an 18-month-old will want to give it a try, and a three-year-old can certainly do it alone. Remember, it's OK to skip pages or go in any order. \*Board books are especially great for encouraging a child to turn pages.

**Create Books Together:** your child may be a lot more interested in a book if it has pictures of him or his family. Tablets are great to make home-made books. Another fun idea is to make a color book by having fun with crayons, markers, and paints.

**Keep It Simple:** For young children it is generally best to stick to books that are not too overwhelming or overstimulating. (Go easy on the lights and sounds books).